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Building Multicultural Alliances: A Practical Guide

*by Bisola Marignay**

Until a few years ago many managers and consultants believed that assisting a monocultural organization to become a multicultural organization, one which values, utilizes and promotes gender and racial diversity in its work force, was a relatively simple task. It required little more than a few training workshops. Today, however, many recognize that in order to be successful, a change effort must be comprehensive, systematic and long range. Even then, there are no guarantees.

Judith H. Katz and Frederick A. Miller[1]

PREFACE

In the winter of 1990 the Illinois Pro-Choice Alliance was directed by its Board to address the issue of inclusivity within a project specifically designed for that purpose. One of the major goals of the Inclusivity Project was to broaden the Alliance's base of membership to include organizations representing people of color. The project was initiated in May 1990 through efforts to increase the Board's sensitivity to racial differ-

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* This article was written for the Illinois Pro-Choice Alliance.

Thanks to Sarah Willie, Deborah Santow, and Melissa Doy, who worked with me as interns during the first months of this project. Due to their assistance I was saved from the arduous tasks of making hundreds of telephone calls, locating and reviewing reference materials, and much photocopying. Sarah, who is completing a Ph.D. in sociology at Northwestern University, served as my valued discussant from the very beginning of the project and was also a reader of the draft. Her patience and candid opinions helped to sustain my confidence when the path of the work was unclear, and her rigorous critique helped me to clarify several ideas within. Deborah and Melissa, undergraduates at Northwestern University, helped me to identify boundaries in the project through their sincere reactions to it.

The Inclusivity Project is supported by grants from the Ms. Foundation for Women, Woods Charitable Trust, Chicago Foundation for Women, Arie & Ida Crown Memorial, and New Prospect Foundation.

We are thankful for the social consciousness that promotes this support.

1. Judith H. Katz and Frederick A. Miller, *Between Monoculturism and Multiculturism: Traps Awaiting the Organization*, 20 OD PRACTITIONER (Sept. 1988).

ence and was continued by identifying and making contact with organizations that represent people of color.

Beginning in August 1990 we researched and developed a list of organizations representing people of color throughout the country, then telephoned to introduce the Alliance, to get additional organizational listings, and to seek their involvement in the Alliance. Those organizations that were not reached by telephone were contacted by mail. After exhausting possibilities at the national level, we concentrated on Illinois organizations. By the latter part of September, we were able to assess the responses and determine the need for a strategy that would connect us at the human level with individuals at the other end of the phone lines. At the time, we were planning a multicultural meeting that included panelists from various racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds, so we changed our telephone tactic from introducing ourselves and seeking information to inviting representatives of the organizations to the meeting. As a result, we received warmer responses and were able to gather information through conversations that would not have been possible before. Those efforts, along with the multi-racial meeting, interviews, and small gatherings, formed the basic research for this article. The information given here was obtained from observing and participating in those processes.

This article is the result of eight months of working through the issues and obstacles that preclude active participation in the reproductive rights movement by a representative number of people of color known to be pro-choice.[2] It responds to the problem of multicultural coalition-building which, in our stratified society, can be as difficult as the problems that necessitate it. As indicated by the title, the handbook is intended to aid the process of multicultural alliance-building through analyzing the problems attendant on the process and by proposing resolutions. The point of view expressed, although informed by theoretical considerations, is the outcome of experience.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Shortly after the *Roe v. Wade*[3] decision in 1973, legislators began introducing legislation to prohibit Medicaid-funded abortions for poor women. The Hyde Amendment,[4] passed in 1977, cut off most federal

2. *See* BLACK WOMEN FOR REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE, FACT SHEET, THE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH OF BLACK WOMEN *and* Ann F. Lopez, *Latinas and Repro Rights — Silent No More*, MS., Mar./Apr. 1991, at 91.

3. 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

4. 42 U.S.C. 1396, Pub. L. No. 94-439 209, 90 Stat. 1434 (1977)(prior to subsequent amendments).

funds for abortion services. The Illinois General Assembly enacted the same prohibitions. At that time, several pro-choice organizations united as an ad hoc committee for abortion rights. By 1979 it became clear to them that it would be necessary to fight anti-abortion bills during every legislative session. That presented a need for ongoing coordination of strategies and sharing of information. As a result, the Illinois Pro-Choice Alliance was incorporated in 1979, and its affiliate, the Educational Fund, was incorporated in 1984.

At the time the Alliance was formed, abortion was a highly divisive term; few organizations were willing to take a public pro-choice position. The Alliance was formed by organizations that were outspoken about abortion rights. Although the memberships of the various organizations forming the Alliance were diverse, few of those organizations represented diverse racial and ethnic groups. However, according to executive director Betsy Brill, involvement of racially and culturally diverse organizations in the Alliance was always a concern. Over and above "being a good thing to do," the Alliance recognized that an accurate representation of the supporters of reproductive rights was strategically important to political effectiveness. The Inclusivity Project is the systematic activation of the Alliance's concern about diversifying its membership.

In stating the above political conditions of the project and realizing the contrasting social and personal inducements to ascribe motivation to moral principles, I believe it necessary to clarify the importance of self-interest to the process of building alliances. The practical need for diversity to strengthen a political position that is in the self-interest of participants is a solid, and perhaps the only, basis for developing a working relationship with others.[5] Support by all for the common cause of all concerned is the basis of equality in the relationship.

Organizing on the basis of good intention dichotomizes participants into doers and receivers and elevates the cause of doing to an abstract morality that is attributed to the doers. That attribution gives a superior status to the doers, who begin to act out a superior standing. The condescension that inevitably results incites hostility in those identified as the receivers. Then, those adhering to the rightness of good intention are frustrated in the face of its negative effect without recognizing their part in it. The resulting antagonistic opposition develops into unresolvable conflict.

Thus, from the view of this writer, recognition of collective interest by each unit is the primary condition necessary for a coalition of dispa-

5. *See* SAUL D. ALINSKY, RULES FOR RADICALS: A PRACTICAL PRIMER FOR REALISTIC RADICALS 23 (practicality of morality), 53 (full discussion on self-interest) (1971).

rate groups. As such, that view establishes the first guideline.

B. BUILDING INCLUSIVITY AFTER AN ASSOCIATION IS ESTABLISHED

The primary obstacle confronting efforts to build cultural diversity in an existing monocultural association of any type is the fact of its existence. Groups targeted for inclusion are resistant to efforts to recruit them into established monocultural associations. Resistance is frequently expressed as suspicion of the motives behind the recruitment. People of color are suspicious that it is only their numbers and visibility that is desired rather than a serious consideration of their problems or their ideas. Unfortunately, the history of political activism centered on women's issues in the United States, including the suffrage movement, gives legitimacy to this view.

The women's movement in the middle of the last century began by promoting radical and lasting changes in the situation of all women. The ideals of the abolitionist movement were expressed in those promoted by women activists. However, by the late nineteenth century those ideals were abandoned for expediency's sake, and an ideological shift positioned the suffragist movement against minorities, immigrants, and the working class. In her historical analysis of the period, Marta Cotera states:

> Although many social workers like Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, and Sophonisba P. Breckenridge and socialists like Emma Goldman advocated the rights of immigrants and working women, in most instances during the 1890 to 1910 period their advocacy had little or no effect on the suffragist movement's attitude toward minority or working-class women.[6]

Abandonment of the larger platform by the suffragists was based on an expedient strategy to diffuse anti-suffragist attacks. Thus, in order to secure the vote for themselves, white middle-class women sided with the opposition against the "ignorant vote," which included immigrants and African Americans. Even after the labor-suffrage coalition was built at the beginning of this century, "the nagging race issue . . . continued to keep minority women at arm's length . . . . As black women were affected through exclusion, Chicanas suffered the same fate especially in the southwestern states."[7]

The birth control movement in the United States was initiated in the social context described above. Although the term "birth control" was coined and the movement popularized by a woman, Margaret Higgens

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6. Marta Cotera, *Feminism: The Chicana and Anglo Versions, in* TWICE A MINORITY: MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN 220 (1980).

7. *Id.* at 221.

Sanger, from a working-class background, its progressive foundation was overshadowed by the racist and xenophobic sentiments of the period. Concern for the improved quality of life reproductive control could grant women of different racial and social backgrounds was replaced by concern about limiting the numbers of those populations. In discussing the history of the birth control movement, Angela Davis states:

> If the suffragists acquiesced to arguments invoking the extension of the ballot to women as the saving grace of white supremacy, then birth control advocates either acquiesced to or supported the new arguments invoking birth control as a means of preventing the proliferation of the "lower classes" and as an antidote to race suicide. Race suicide could be prevented by the introduction of birth control among Black people, immigrants and the poor in general. In this way, the prosperous whites of solid Yankee stock could maintain their superior numbers within the population. Thus, class-bias and racism crept into the birth control movement when it was still in its infancy. More and more, it was assumed within birth control circles that poor women, Black and immigrant alike, had a "moral obligation" to restrict the size of their families. What was demanded as a "right" for the privileged came to be interpreted as a "duty" for the poor.[8]

In the view of many women of color, the classism and racism of the earlier movement, albeit in more subtle forms, remain entrenched in the new wave of feminism. These women charge that the women's movement does not address the needs of women of color or poor women, that moral issues have been cast aside, and that the basic values of the movement are lost within social practices that replicate those that the movement ostensibly opposes.

This background presents many difficulties to multicultural coalition-building from the ground up. Implementing inclusivity after the coalition is an operating entity can be overwhelming. Even when diversity is seen from the inside as adding value to the association and members have been sensitized to the issues, there are still major obstacles to a successful change effort. *The most difficult fact to face by those initiating the effort is that the final outcome is not under the control of the coalition,* but resides with the multicultural organizations. Their decision to become affiliated is what will allow the change to occur, and the facts discussed above are likely to enter into their decision-making process. Thus it is important to develop a long-range plan to bring about the change and

8. Angela Y. Davis, *Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights, in* ALL AMERICAN WOMEN 245 (Johnette B. Cole ed., 1986).

avoid thinking of the desired results as a product. There is no formula that can be implemented that will automatically yield results. It is also a mistake to assume that the change effort is actualized by the consultant hired to guide it; inclusivity cannot be hired. The consultant hired to initiate the project is merely an instrument who puts into effect results from the efforts of the entire membership. A more productive way of viewing the change effort is as an ongoing process through which the association remains in contact with constituents.

II. CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ISSUE

The apparent indifference to reproductive rights activism across cultural boundaries is inconsistent with the numbers of women of color who have abortions.[9] This indifference suggests a lack of understanding of the crucial importance of reproductive rights activism in maintaining the legal status of abortion and individual rights in general. In other words, many women apparently do not recognize how crucial the work is to their interests. However, in order to accurately assess the gap between use and support it is necessary to understand how, and to what degree, culture, history, and social position bear upon it.

The attitudes of people of color towards reproductive rights activism are shaped by their concern with basic survival issues, as well as their specific cultural views on abortion. Amid the many differences among them, the priority of survival concerns was articulated again and again by women who addressed the issue in the context of this project. The priority of survival is probably the most intractable obstacle to the involvement of large numbers of people of color in the reproductive rights movement. The majority of the people devote a large portion of their time and energy to earning wages. In addition, they have personal and family obligations that are often made more onerous by their limited resources. Although there are other cultural constraints specific to each of the various groups, which will be discussed, time and energy to devote to political participation was seen as sparse among all of the groups represented. And, more often than not, when minority women participate it is most likely to be within organizations committed to ending racism and improving conditions for people of their racial or ethnic group, as opposed to groups concerned with women's issues.[10]

It may be important to consider here, given the facts stated above and

9. *See* FACT SHEET, *supra* note 2, *and* Lopez, *supra* note 2, at 91.

10. *See, e.g.*, Esther Ngan-Ling Chow, *The Feminist Movement: Where are all the Asian-American Women?, in* MAKING WAVES: AN ANTHOLOGY BY AND ABOUT ASIAN WOMEN 371 (1989).

examples of high involvement in previous political movements, such as the civil rights movement, the structural difference between the two types of activism.

The first distinction, and perhaps that which affects motivation most directly, is between a goal sought and the maintenance of a goal achieved. The internal rewards may not be as significant in maintenance work as they are when there is a clear idea of victory to be achieved. Clarity is also important, as we discovered that many women do not understand what the work is about in that abortion is already legal. Inhe Choi, one of the women who participated in the multicultural meeting, stated that in her research with Asian women of various ethnic backgrounds, there were questions such as: "Why all the fuss about something that is available?" This is understandable when we consider that much of the reproductive rights work is responsive to bills, amendments, laws, and other legislative processes that are shrouded in mystery for most Americans. Then, too, what there is to do, the tasks, and how they are structured enters into how much participation there is from different groups. Much of the day-to-day work in the movement is formal and often executed by individuals who are compensated to do it. The less-formal work, such as clinic escorting, requires exposure of identity that may be constrained by group pressure.

Support of the work through membership and board activity with organizations and associations that are directly involved with the issue is the thorny area. Some women think that that level of participation is indirect and does not help to increase awareness among their constituents. This is also the area in which much of the multicultural conflict arises. Power issues expressed in terms of control, ownership, and reward form the center of change in which dilemmas and challenges emerge. However, the primary difficulty expressed by women of color active within the reproductive rights movement is related to definition of the agenda.

Women of color, and in particular African Americans and Latinas, have been very vocal about the need for a broader agenda that includes reproductive health issues and overall access to health care. It is argued that there can be no choice without access to health care, contraceptives, and sex education. Working on a reproductive rights agenda limited to abortion is seen by some as a luxury.[11]

On the other side, those who work exclusively on the abortion issue, while supporting a reproductive health agenda, believe that if abortion is lost there is little hope for attaining the expanded package. Abortion is

11. *See* Patricia A. Tyson, *The Force of Women of Color and Reproductive Rights: An Expanded Agenda Beyond Abortion, in* COMMON GROUND DIFFERENT PLANES, RELIGIOUS COALITION FOR ABORTION RIGHTS WOMEN OF COLOR PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM NEWSLETTER (Spring 1991).

immediately and directly threatened, and the erosion of the legal status of abortion is seen as necessitating separate and full-time attention. Other reasons given for maintaining the focus on abortion is so that it never appears that it is being hidden under the cover of other issues, and so that politicians cannot negotiate it out of reproductive packages.[12] However, it should be noted that controversy arising from changes in the movement's range and definition of issues is not new. During the early history of feminism, advocacy for a broader approach to achieving suffrage was silenced by the middle-class mainstream out of fear that the movement would be identified with socialism.[13] Also, the contention that has been stirred by the current broader-agenda issue is analogous to that prompted by the name change — from women's liberation to women's rights — that the movement underwent in the 1970s to acquire a broader appeal.

I suggest that resolution between the two positions on the current issue may reside in answers to the following questions:

* Are women willing to risk the loss of legalized abortion to maintain these two positions?

* If abortion services are needed by all women, does any one group of women have greater responsibility for maintaining the legal status of abortion?

* Do all women have a responsibility to create and implement a reproductive health agenda that works for their own communities? If so, how is this best accomplished?

* What is the strategic importance of abortion to the promotion and achievement of a high-quality, comprehensive reproductive-health system that would be accessible to all women?

* What are the strategic advantages of conjoining abortion with a broader reproductive health agenda?

* Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

The resolution of the split on the agenda issue is extremely important to effective support of reproductive rights; closure would harness the energy of many women of color. However, that resolution will not solve the problem of under-representation by women of color, as there are other explanations for the low involvement for these groups in the reproductive rights movement. Cultural restrictions, religious traditions, class-related issues, sterilization abuses, annihilation thought, and estrangement are the

12. Discussion with Ann Kuta, associate director of Chicago National Organization for Women, was instructive in setting out possible political strategizing.

13. Cotera, *supra* note 6, at 221-22.

barriers that hinder greater participation in the reproductive rights movement by African Americans, Asians, Latinas, and Native Americans. Although, as previously stated, there is active representation from all of those groups in the movement, it is just a scattering when compared with the number of women from those groups who have abortions and with those who believe that women have the right to decide what to do with their bodies. Factors pertaining to the discrepancy are considered below by group.

A. AFRICAN AMERICANS

In July of 1989, the Supreme Court ruling in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*[14] allowed states to place more restrictions on abortion services. On September 17, 1989, Paul Ruffins, executive editor of *Black Networking News*, proclaimed in the *Los Angeles Times* that "Black women, long the sleeping giant in the reproductive-rights struggle, have officially come off the sidelines."[15] The significance of this announcement is that it marked the first appearance of African American organizations in the reproductive rights arena. Although many African Americans were personally pro-choice and visible in the movement, organizations led by Blacks had not made commitments to it. The pro-choice declaration by sixteen nationally known Black women representing several major organizations was seen as signaling a radical change in the overall African-American response. But the prohibitive factors are deeply entrenched and require much more work to deliver attitudinal changes.

The church has been the major institutional voice in the African American community since its formation. With few exceptions, that voice has been male, fundamentalist, and anti-choice, although most of the supporters of the church are female. In the secular realm, the strain of Nationalist thought that holds that the promotion of abortion rights is part of the genocide plan carries a great deal of force. These views enter into to what Byllye Avery, founding president of the National Black Women's Health Project, has called "the conspiracy of silence about abortion in our lives."[16] We know that before abortion was legalized, hundreds of thousands of Black women died from hack abortions, that in New York fifty percent of illegal abortion deaths were Black women, and that Black women now have twenty percent of all abortions in America.[17] The denial of abortion by African Americans is ultimately connected to cultural ideals developed when the only hope for betterment was invested in

14. 492 U.S. 490 (1989).

15. Paul Ruffins, *Blacks Backing Pro-Choice Add a Compelling Voice*, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, Sept. 17, 1989, § 5, 1.

16. *Id.*

17. *See* FACT SHEET, *supra* note 2.

children. The high infant mortality rate, in addition to the struggle against sterilization and other reproductive abuses, remains a major area of concern in the Black community. These factors, combined with the problems of disease, drugs, poverty, and growing disbelief in the effectiveness of political process, make up the field in which it is necessary to cultivate support for the reproductive rights movement in the African American community.

B. ASIAN AMERICANS

Asian women are constrained to a large extent by survival issues, as are other women of color. In her assessment of the low involvement of Asian American women in the women's movement, Esther Ngan-Ling Chow states that slightly more than half the Asian women in the United States are immigrants. Moreover, "ethnic diversity among Asian Americans and geographic dispersion make it difficult for them to organize and be perceived as a significant group with political force."[18] Language differences pose a serious barrier to political activism as do the contradictions between the values that promote activism and those that are typical to Asian cultures.

The concept of privacy common in Asian cultures is incompatible with the explicitness that involvement in the reproductive rights movement requires. Issues pertaining to sexuality and reproduction are not approved topics of public discussion among Asian Americans. They are subjects to be discussed with family members and perhaps friends.[19] However, Asian American women, when questioned, acknowledged the necessity for abortion under given circumstances.[20] The divergence between acknowledgment of abortions as a necessity and the apparent apathy Asian American women express about its legal status is explained by several factors. An important determinant is the resourcefulness of Asian American women in meeting their need for abortion in a range of circumstances. Explanations, often issuing from non-Asian sources, attribute that resourcefulness to a competency based on herbal knowledge and practice. Inhe Choi queried Asian women from various ethnic backgrounds about their knowledge of the use of herbs for abortion. Many of the women had heard about the practice; however, none claimed competency for herself or was acquainted with anyone with the knowledge.

Factors such as the availability of abortion services in their native countries, socialization to place high value on obedience and political

18. Chow, *supra* note 10, at 363.

19. From discussion with Cindy Choi and testimony of women attending meeting Nov. 12, 1990.

20. Reported by Inhe Choi and testimony of women attending meeting Nov. 20, 1990.

apathy, and the political circumstances motivating their move to the United States comprise a more probable explanation of Asian American women's level of engagement with the reproductive rights movement. Abortion is legal in a large part of Asia, and even in those countries where it is illegal enforcement is lax, and the quality of the service is not compromised. In South Korea, for example, abortion is illegal but women are able to obtain quality service since abortion is not a risk to doctors or patients. Thus, the false expectation of availability under all circumstances may be the important attitudinal barrier to bringing more Asian women into the movement. Religion may also act as a barrier for some. Various denominations of Christianity have been adopted by many Asians in their homelands and shape negative views of abortion.

C. LATINAS

Characteristics common to the subgroups that are covered by the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are found primarily in language and religious background. The populations covered by those terms migrate from non-contiguous geographic regions — various islands and coastal and inland countries — and are culturally diverse. They migrate to the United States from all regions in search of economic opportunity. Still, Latinos have a higher unemployment rate than non-Latinos.

How the poverty level combined with language barriers affect the reproductive health of the Latina population is just beginning to be documented. As of yet, we have no documentation of Latin women's attitudes on reproductive rights. The teachings of the Roman Catholic Church have been cited as the major cultural deterrent to involvement in the movement by Latinas. Those teachings are said to influence the desirability of large nuclear families by Latino couples and the prestige system whereby women are recognized as valued adults because of their potential and ability to bear children.[21] Machismo, the male control of the social existence of females, is another cultural variable cited as a barrier to Latin women's active engagement, in large numbers, in the reproductive rights movement.[22]

The accuracy of the reasons given for the low visibility of Latin women in the reproductive rights movement is indeterminate. However, we do know that the women do seek abortions and, according to Maria Blanco of Latinas for Reproductive Choice, they "are having abortions at

21. Carlos G. Velez-I, *The Non-Consenting Sterilization of Mexican Women in Los Angeles: Issues of Psychocultural Rupture and Legal Redress in Paternalistic Behavioral Environments, in* TWICE A MINORITY: MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN 235, 237 (1980).

22. *Id.* at 241.

a rate that is 60 percent higher than non-Latinas."[23] It may be that cultural ideals compel Latin women to remain silent, although they do not constrain them from having abortions. In addition, many of the women work long hours at low-paying jobs to support themselves and dependents in this country and those left behind in their native countries. It is important to understand that time and the priority of needs are primary considerations in assessing political involvement. Activism may be a luxury that many people cannot afford unless it will directly affect their survival needs.[24]

D. NATIVE AMERICANS

The Indian community's response to our outreach efforts and to the topic of reproductive rights is significant as it raises the question of which groups should be pursued and to what extent. Outreach to the Native American community has been the least successful of all under this project. In addition, there is very little published information on Indian women's attitudes on reproductive rights. However, there is a great deal known about the abuses Indian women have suffered. Forced sterilization and cancer-causing contraceptives are horrors that still plague Indian women. It is estimated that twenty-four percent of Indian women have been sterilized against their will.[25] In addition, Native Americans have one of the highest infant mortality rates of all groups in America: 27.5 deaths per 1,000 births in South Dakota, ninety percent of which is Native American.[26] Moreover, since there are no funds available for poor women, most Native American women would not have access to abortion even if they wanted one. These facts were the replies we received from Indian women in response to our presentation on the importance of their involvement in the reproductive rights movement.

The Indian community's distance from the reproductive rights movement is instructive. It requires us to note the political implications of the term diversity. We add to the injustice Indians suffer when we fail to acknowledge their unique position in this society, lump them in the minority category, and assume that their concerns will be the same as others. American Indians have had no respite from the historical events of domination. Unlike non-Indians, they are a people living in their own home-

23. Lopez, *supra* note 2, at 91.

24. This point is made by Esther Ngan-Ling Chow, *supra* note 10, relative to Asian American women. However, it also typifies the facts that we encountered among African Americans, Latinas, and Native Americans.

25. Davis, *supra* note 8, at 250.

26. *Empowerment though Dialogue: Native American Women Hold Historic Meeting, in* COMMON GROUND DIFFERENT PLANES, RELIGIOUS COALITION FOR ABORTION RIGHTS WOMEN OF COLOR PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM NEWSLETTER 5 (July 1990).

land struggling to survive and retain some of their land and their identity under the onslaught of a foreign and hostile ruling system. When Indian women do address the topic of reproductive rights, as they did at a conference held in Pierre, South Dakota, in 1990, they are likely to agree with Charon Asetoyer, director of the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, who stated: "Our reproductive rights are much broader than abortion."

III. WHERE TO LOOK FOR ALLIES AND HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM

> The basic requirement for the understanding of the politics of change is to recognize the world as it is. We must work with it on its own terms if we are to change it to the kind of world we would like it to be. We must first see the world as it is and not as we would like it to be. We must see the world as all political realists have, in terms of what [people] do and not what they ought to do.[27]

The foregoing descriptions of cultural obstacles to increased participation in the reproductive rights movement by women of color may appear dismal. However, it is necessary to have a clear view of the hard facts that set the conditions where organizing is desired. It is also important to understand that these facts are subject to change. Indeed, the objective of studying the facts is to see where and how interaction can begin to bring about change. In regard to organizing people of color, it is important to understand the levels at which people are organized.

Many people of color are organized at the grassroots and regional levels. Survival issues that stem from problems of immediate threat and concern activate the building of organizations by people of color. As they expand their view of the problems addressed, they begin to define community in broader terms. Networks from grassroots to regional to national levels are then developed. In this way, community organizations are able to expand their influence nationally before attaining a national membership. In fact, the number of organizations built by people of color that have attained a national or regional membership is slight when compared to the total number of their organizations. Then too, many of those that have attained those levels take the position that the reproductive rights issue is not relevant to their concerns.[28] Therefore, it is not valid to use national or regional status as a primary criterion for the organizations we seek to support the movement.

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27. *See* ALINSKY, *supra* note 4, at 12.
28. Information received from contacts made during initial phase of the project.

If we are serious about engaging people of color in the reproductive rights struggle, we must rigorously seek community organizations as formal allies. Community organizations have influence with the people they serve. Many of those served have no contact with national organizations, and the messages that they hear are those sent by people they know and trust. Then, too, exemplary work by community leaders can and often does lead to influence at the national level. This does not mean that national organizations are to be avoided as allies, only that it is not meaningful to focus exclusively on them as they do not reflect the major level of organizing in the communities where allies are needed.

Cultural diversity implies differences in all aspects of social life, including where and how people are organized. Those differences must be considered in every phase of planning and development. As stated previously, the difficulty of building cultural diversity into an existing monocultural coalition or organization rests on the fact that the terms on which it operates are derived from the monocultural perspective. Thus, if the specifics of how diverse groups operate do not fit the terms of the existing association, it has to change its terms if multicultural change is to be actualized.

IV. WHAT TO DO WHEN THE POTENTIAL ALLIES ARE IDENTIFIED

A. MAKING CONTACT

Another reason for looking to community organizations for allies is that it allows for personalized contact with individuals in decision-making positions. Given the facts of cultural conditions described above, the outreach effort is frequently aimed at enlisting the support of groups that do not recognize or acknowledge the cause of supporting reproductive rights as common to their interest. Demonstrating that commonality is an important part of the process, and that requires establishing and maintaining ongoing exchanges. It is easier to do that with groups within the same locality. We discovered that without a personal introduction from a third party, a specific and immediate reason for contact is needed in order to hold the attention of representatives of organizations on all levels. Strong reasons are local events in which representatives from the targeted organization and the monocultural association can participate or attend. This brings a natural feel to the development of relationships. The mass-sell approach, where the idea is to contact as many organizations as possible and barrage the contacts with questions and information, does not work. It operates on the false assumption that information about the issue and work related to it will have a compelling effect on contacts and move them to action. *The objective should be the establishment of an ac-*

quaintance that can grow into a relationship that may become an alliance. Time frames and measures for new memberships frustrate efforts, since inclusivity work is more akin to public relations than to selling.

B. DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

Given the attitudinal descriptions above, it is necessary to understand that development will not be instantaneous. Relationships have to be built, and the timeline is not under the control of the seeking agent. Patience is aided by attending to other aspects of public relations that increase the effect of interaction. Developing a high-recognition identity for the coalition among the targeted populations should be considered as important as making contacts.

Inter-organizational work in support of issues that interlock with reproductive rights is one way to increase name recognition while providing an opportunity to discuss how the issues are connected. This can be accomplished by several means. On some occasions, messages of support will be sufficient. On other occasions, it may be necessary to attend an event or participate in a meeting. However, it is necessary to know what targeted organizations are doing in order to decide the level of support. This requires compiling and updating information on activities and events sponsored by targeted organizations. Responsibility for inter-organizational work should be shared among coalition members. How to accomplish this will be determined by the specific structure of each organizing unit. The purpose of outreach is to build a bridge for future meetings. And that requires meeting people on their own turf, often, and not expecting them to do the reaching or to come simply because they are asked.

Finally, don't build expectations of a formal commitment on the relationships, and you may get one.

V. MAINTAINING THE ALLIANCE

A. PROBLEMS THAT OBSTRUCT COHESION

Expectation of the happy ending after cultural diversity is accomplished causes members to look upon conflict, especially conflict arising from diversity, as failure. Retreats should be used to help members understand the constraints that shape the personality of the association and the expectations individuals bring to it. People are drawn to the work by personal motivations as well as commitment to organizational goals; understanding that helps to understand what they are willing to do. Awareness of the general tendencies of group process is also important in keeping expectations in line. Human interaction is dynamic. There will be conflict and some of it will be, or may be, categorized as cultural or ra-

cial. Under those circumstances it should be remembered that individuals do not necessarily represent, in their behavior, the groups from which they come; sometimes they misrepresent the consensus of their group. Accurate representation requires broad diversity within the groups represented. It means including people from different class and educational backgrounds within communities of color rather than searching for social or professional correlates of existing members.

Some conflicts can be anticipated and facilitated through organizational systems that ensure equity in voice, responsibility, and visibility. But in order for the inclusive group to reach a stage of effective cohesion, it is necessary for the members to move beyond defensiveness and shyness when challenged on issues of diversity; those issues must be addressed openly.

When there are differences in opinion or confrontations, it is best to avoid assuming ill intent on the basis of the social identity of individuals involved, as it undermines the goals of inclusivity. Accusations of right and wrong and assertions about motivation bog conflict in personal quarrels. It is more useful to address why an act is perceived as a transgression and what can be done to correct the situation rather than focus on its motivation. Making clear statements as to the kind of behavior that is acceptable or unacceptable to one is ultimately more useful than concerning oneself with the motivation of others. Also, it should be realized that conflict usually arises between individuals, and that is where resolutions should be sought. The conflict should not be generalized to the coalition as a whole if it is not a group issue. However, if it is an issue that belongs to the group, even if it involves individuals who are polarized, discussion and resolution should remain in the group. Every effort should be made to avoid personalizing issues so that resolutions are not based on who is liked or disliked.

The power domains of the association must be structured so that the new members of the coalition are included. New members must have a clear sense of ownership in the association. This is accomplished through ownership of responsibilities that are of high value to the coalition, including participation in high-priority decision-making. The terms of responsibility have to be defined overtly to establish a standard by which to judge complaints. Ownership entails having authority over one's work and a recognized voice in group decisions. Commitment to the alliance is strengthened when one feels valued as a participant. Members should be encouraged to "reproduce" members by bringing in at least one additional representative from their group to minimize the burn-out that results from being the "only one."

The experience of tokenism has revealed how power-sharing is avoided after inclusivity is achieved. The means used include delegation of

responsibility without authority; exclusion from the inner circle of decision-making; selection of the least competent individuals to represent their ethnic or racial group; and modification of the rules when they negatively implicate those who hold the power.

It is important to realize that exclusion from the inner circle of decision-making can occur inadvertently, even when the structure of an association is non-hierarchical. "Jane," the underground abortion service that operated in Chicago from the late 1960s to 1973, was founded on values that promoted equality of power, perceived as information, among all the women involved — those receiving service and those who served.[29] However, in their internal dealings equality was lacking as

> a handful of women controlled the group . . . . Rather than hierarchy, power evolved through a series of concentric circles, with the outer circle composed of service members whose involvement was tangential. Smaller circles led to the inner circle, the women who had all the information because they had the greatest involvement, . . . could and did make the major decisions.[30]

This example speaks to the importance of instituting mechanisms and structuring system reviews to avoid such situations.

B. COMMUNICATION

In acknowledging the offensiveness of American racism, we understand the defensive attitude of many non-white groups. Social structure places poor people and people of color in largely defensive and reactive positions. We must, however, encourage people to be proactive rather than reactive.[31] And it is necessary to listen to all their concerns if we are to encourage people to act on what is important to them. *Therefore, there must be preparation for the possibility that what they have to say may lead to substantive changes in the coalitions in which they are included.* However, it is inconceivable that the established systems of communication from any group will adequately serve the needs of the new composition. Thus, sincerity has to serve as the basic guide for productive communication. However, this is not as simple as it may appear. There are conventions in communications, used in interracial situations,

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29. "Jane," *Just Call Jane, in* FROM ABORTION TO REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM: TRANSFORMING A MOVEMENT 93 (Marlene Gerber Fried ed., 1990).

30. *Id.* at 99.

31. Discussions with Sarah Willie, spring 1991, on the emotional content of social decisions and actions helped me to understand how power is attained by poor people and people of color in moving from reactive to proactive, where the focus is on self, individual and collective. The logic of the collective interest requires that we expand the description of those with whom we have shared interests. Power inheres in expanded awareness and is harnessed through the connections awareness produces.

that serve as pretend dialogue and actually prohibit engaged discussion. Linguistic tokenism allows for patronizing tolerance of nonsense and disconnection from serious ideas. The absence of challenge and large doses of praise in interracial communication is seen by some as representative of racial sensitivity. However, Meg Greenfield has defined it as "whitespeak" and says that it represents a "psychic barrier that whites have thrown up to distance and insulate themselves from blacks. The barrier does not keep blacks out of buildings, but it does keep them out of consideration as real people."[32] In looking at the other side, she states:

> Many blacks I know, who see the aren't-you-all-just-wonderful-put-down of themselves by white people for what it is, nonetheless see no reason that blacks, so long deprived of equal advantage in this country, should not get the good of it. And some black politicians have played it like a violin.[33]

The conversational code described by Greenfield has implications for overall relations among multicultural groups. The important point is that people are aware of condescension and other actions of inequality in all their various forms. Communication occurs on several levels simultaneously; what is said takes meaning from the total context. Messages of hostility are conveyed through insincere communication, and in general people will either demonstrate their intolerance of it through absence or will construct counter-strategies to use it to their advantage.

Communication is the basic tool to be employed in the work of bringing people together from many different backgrounds. The tool will require continuous inspection, shaping, and definition. However, effective communication is merely the means and must be built on a desire for inclusion derived from an understanding of common interest. If it is in our interest to work together, it has to be in our interest to share the power that is generated from the work. The effectiveness of the overall effort will be equal in measure to how well that is done.

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32. Meg Greenfield, *The Condescension of Whitespeak*, NEWSWEEK, April 18, 1983, at 100.

33. *Id.*